



HANDHELDS NEWS

■ OPERA MINI ON THE WAY

Opera Software is trialling Opera Mini, a Java web browser that works with almost all mobile phones. The Opera web browser was previously available only for Symbian Series 60 and Windows Mobile-based smartphones. Opera Mini allows most low- and mid-range WAP-capable phones access to the internet.

The software gets around the limited processing power of cheaper handsets by pre-processing the page on a remote server so it arrives ready formatted on the handset.

Opera Mini is only available in Norway at present, but if the test is successful the service will be brought to the rest of Europe.

■ T-MOBILE MDA PRO ANNOUNCED

T-Mobile has announced the latest addition to its MDA range. The MDA Pro joins the MDAll and MDA Compact phone and PDA combinations, and is pitched as a 'mini laptop' for messaging, internet and 3G videoconferencing.

The MDA Pro has a clamshell design. Its 3.6" screen can be rotated to make it easier to view different sizes of document. The integrated QWERTY keyboard allows fast data entry. Every kind of wireless connection is covered, including 3G, GPRS, 802.11b and Bluetooth, so the MDA Pro can use the fastest network connection available. The MDA Pro is available with a mobile contract from T-Mobile.



REVIEW PORTABLE CONSOLE

SONY PlayStation Portable

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £179 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk

DETAILS <http://uk.playstation.com>

The PlayStation Portable (PSP) is Sony's first portable games console, finally launched in Europe after several months' delay. Unlike Nintendo's DS, which is purely for games, it also plays films stored on Sony's Universal Media Discs (UMDs) and has a memory card slot for music and video files.

The PSP is big and heavy, making it more suited to a bag than a pocket. The size is mainly due to the enormous 4.3" widescreen LCD, possibly the PSP's most impressive feature. It is a high-contrast reflective display, which is perfect for watching films, and is far bigger than any other gaming deck on the market. Games have incredibly vibrant colours and detail, and films played from UMDs look as good as a DVD.

It has a clean design, but there are some strange touches. The volume is controlled by two tiny buttons on the front, which are quite hard to press, and the joypad on the left is too low to use comfortably. After a while, your left thumb aches.

Games and films come on 1.8GB UMDs. There is more room on a disc than on a solid-state cartridge, but games take a while to load. UMD films cost about the same as the DVD equivalent, but as the PSP has no video out you will have to buy films exclusively to watch on the move.

You could encode films yourself and play them on the PSP from a Memory Stick Duo, but Sony hasn't made this easy. The PSP doesn't come with any software to help you encode content and get it on to the device, or even a USB cable. You'll need a third-party encoder to convert films to MP4 format



in the correct resolution, and then you must manually create the correct folders on the Memory Stick for the content. Films encoded at near-DVD quality take up around 650MB, so you'll need to buy a 1GB Memory Stick for a normal-length film. The PSP also supports MP3 and ATRAC format music files, and sound quality is excellent.

Unlike Nokia's N-Gage, the PSP uses 802.11b wireless networking for multiplayer gaming and not Bluetooth. You can set up an ad hoc network with another PSP or connect to a wireless access point for internet access, and setting up a network is easy with the built-in wizard.

Like Apple's iPod, the PSP is as much a fashion item as a gadget, but it is more than a trendy accessory. It's expensive compared to Nintendo's DS, but it is far more powerful and has a much better screen. Sony seems determined to protect the market for its own UMD films by not fitting the PSP with a TV out, and getting your films on the device is difficult. But while it is not as innovative as the DS, the PSP is still a desirable gadget.

Chris Finnamore



Impressive screen; great graphics and sound



No TV out; fiddly to use as a media player

SPECIFICATIONS Portable games console, 4.3" widescreen LCD, UMD disc slot, 32MB Memory Stick Duo, MP3/ATRAC audio support, MP4 video support, 802.11b wireless networking. **Part code** PSP-1000-K

HOTLIST PDA

PALM LifeDrive

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £294 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk

DETAILS www.palm.com

Palm's LifeDrive is a Palm OS-based PDA with an integrated 4GB hard disk. It has all the usual Palm organiser functions, but can also be used as an audio and video player, or simply for storage.

The PDA doesn't come with headphones, but audio playback is impressive. The LifeDrive is good value for a combined PDA and audio player.



SPECIFICATIONS Multimedia PDA, Palm OS 5.4, 416MHz Intel XScale processor, 4GB disk space, Bluetooth, 802.11b wireless networking, SD card slot

HOTLIST SMARTPHONE

ORANGE SPV C500

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE From free to £50 inc VAT

depending on contract

SUPPLIER Orange 0500 802080

DETAILS www.orange.co.uk

The C500 is the smallest smartphone on the market and has an excellent 2.1" colour screen, Bluetooth, micro SD card slot and 64MB of memory. Windows Mobile 2003 Second Edition is a vast improvement over its predecessor. If you want to stay organised on the move, this smartphone is easily the best one for the job.



SPECIFICATIONS Windows Mobile 2003 Second Edition, 64MB memory, tri-band phone, colour screen, 640x480 camera. **Part code** C500

HOTLIST SMARTPHONE

PALM Treo 650

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £400 SIM-free; £100-£200 w/contract

SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk (SIM-free);

www.orange.co.uk (contract)

DETAILS www.palm.com

The Treo 650 replaces Palm's previous smartphone, the Treo 600. It runs the latest version of Palm OS and has a much-improved, higher-resolution screen. The normal Graffiti handwriting recognition system is replaced by a QWERTY keyboard under the screen, which is easy to use. It also works well as a phone despite its chunky size. It's expensive SIM-free, but better value with a mobile phone contract.



SPECIFICATIONS Smartphone, Palm OS 5.4.5, 312MHz Intel PXA270 processor, 23MB RAM, VGA camera, Bluetooth, infrared, GPRS, SD card slot. **Part code** 1040EU



REVIEW MOBILE PHONE

SIEMENS
M75

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £209 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.pixmania.co.ukDETAILS www.siemens.co.uk

Most mobiles smash into little pieces when dropped on a hard surface, but the Siemens M75 is a tough handset built to take a few knocks and the occasional water splash. It also plays MP3s and can synchronise your contacts and calendar with your PC.

The M75 is not particularly attractive, but it looks solid and businesslike in Siemens' signature silver and black finish. The phone's toughened shell adds some bulk, but at 110g it's still quite light. The vulnerable sides and corners are surrounded by rubber and the screen is protected from scratches by the protruding aluminium bars down the side of the display and keypad. The charger and MMC slots are protected by a rubber bung and there is a detachable flap to cover the camera. The handset feels well made, too. After a couple of weeks, no dust had accumulated behind the screen as happens on many handsets.

The M75 has a bright and clear 262,000-colour screen. The menu system is logical and the central joystick and left and right soft keys do most of the work. However, some of the icons above these keys can be confusing. The joystick's click action is quite vague, so you could easily select the wrong option in the menu. Call quality is fine, and the phone has the loudest speakerphone we've heard.

The M75 OS doesn't support third-party applications in the same way as the Symbian Series 60 or Windows Mobile operating systems, but it contains many functions in common with a smartphone.



You can synchronise your contacts and calendar information with Outlook. The phone is supplied with a 32MB MMC card to store MP3s and photos. It has IR and Bluetooth, but it doesn't have a USB cable, so transferring music directly to the handset is a slow process. The supplied synchronisation software seems complicated and daunting at first, but most transfer operations can be done with a few mouse clicks.

Siemens claims that the M75 supports MP3 and Apple's AAC format, but AAC files refused to show up in the phone's music player. The supplied headphones have reasonable treble but a slightly muddy sound. The proprietary connector means you can't plug in a better pair.

The handset has a 1.3-megapixel camera, which performs well in low light conditions, despite not having a flash. However, there is a significant delay between pressing the capture button and the photo being taken, leading to blurry images if you move the phone prematurely.

Despite its bulk, the M75 is a light phone that can take a fair amount of abuse. Siemens has packed the handset with features, and the ability to synchronise with Outlook makes it a useful business tool. It is good value for a Bluetooth phone with a 1.3-megapixel camera, and it will be much cheaper to run when it's available on contract.

Chris Finnamore

✓ Tough; good connectivity

✗ Wobbly joystick; quite bulky

SPECIFICATIONS Tri-band mobile phone, 132x175 pixel LCD, MP3 player, 14MB internal memory, 32MB MMC Mobile card, 1.3-megapixel camera, MP3 player, Bluetooth, IR, talk time five hours, standby time 250 hours, weighs 110g

HOTLIST POCKET PC

ACER
n50 Premium

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £230 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.comDETAILS www.acer.co.uk

Acer's n50 won a Best Buy award in our PDA Megatest (Labs, Shopper August 2005) with its powerful performance, stylish looks and low price. It has a brushed metal effect casing and simple, uncluttered design. Applications start up almost instantly. It has good battery life and infrared, Bluetooth and wireless networking built in, as well as a generous 124MB of user-available storage. Excellent value.



SPECIFICATIONS Intel PXA272 520MHz processor, 124.27MB RAM, SD card slot, Windows Mobile 2003 SE, weighs 150g. Part code CP.N500H.024

HOTLIST SMARTPHONE GPS KIT

NAVICORE
Personal for
Symbian Series 60

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £175 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.mobilefun.co.ukDETAILS www.navicoretech.com

Navicore's Personal is a GPS navigation system for the Symbian Series 60 operating system, as used by Nokia and Siemens smartphones. It consists of a Bluetooth GPS receiver and an RS MMC card containing the map program.

Planning a route is easy thanks to the logical software, and voice prompts are clear and accurate. It's not cheap, but it's the best GPS system for a series 60 phone.



SPECIFICATIONS GPS Navigation for Symbian Series 60 OS, SIRF III Bluetooth GPS receiver, UK maps. Part code 133-8432

CHOOSING A...

SMART
PHONE

Four points to remember when buying a smartphone

1 A smartphone's operating system – Palm, Pocket PC or Symbian – dictates its basic features and what third-party software you can install. Windows Mobile 2003 Second Edition has the familiar look and feel of Windows, right down to a Start button. Palm devices are preferred by many for their ease of use and the vast number of third-party applications available for them. Symbian is quite common on handset-style smartphones. While Symbian's underlying operating system stays the same, enabling third-party programmers to develop software for the OS, its interface can be fully customised by the phone manufacturer and so it may differ from phone to phone.

2 All smartphones come with a colour screen. A high-colour depth of 65,536 colours is important for viewing photos or video clips.

Typically users navigate and input information into a handset type of smartphone using the keypad and buttons or a jog dial. PDA-style smartphones usually have a touch screen, and both Pocket PC and Palm have handwriting recognition features as well as onscreen keyboards. A few have a built-in QWERTY keyboard.

3 Cameras are common in smartphones. Resolution is limited, with two megapixels and a fixed focus lens being the best you'll get. However, as most images will be viewed only onscreen or sent as a video message, this shouldn't be a problem.

4 Bluetooth makes it easier to link your phone to a PC for synchronisation or wireless web access. For internet access, a GPRS or 3G mobile contract is essential. Sign up for one of these when buying your smartphone and you'll also get a discount.

FILL IN YOUR SPECS HERE
(Recommended minimum in grey)

STYLE: Handset

OS: Pocket PC Smartphone 2002

SCREEN: 176x220; 65,536 colours

INPUT: Keypad

CAMERA: 640x480

BLUETOOTH: Yes

DATA CALLS: GPRS